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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, April 7, 1937 of Agriculture

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "SPRING KITCHEN SHOWERS." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Speaking of April showers, listeners, reminds me of those familiar showers that don't concern the weather-man -- those showers not for May flowers but for June brides. You know those gay little gatherings where good friends rain gifts on the bride-to-be? The most popular variety seems to be the kitchen shower. It seems both practical and easy to give. Most showerers have an idea that any kettle or pan, egg-beater, strawberry-huller or what-not will help the bride in getting those first meals.

The bride usually thinks so, too -- until she's had considerable experience in cooking three meals a day and using those gifts. Then she may not feel so grateful as she looks back on that gay little shower. She may even wish her hostess had spent more thought on the kitchen articles and less on the refreshments and decorations. For that shower may have saddled her with a lot of inconvenient, unsuitable utensils that make her cooking job harder and often exasperating. Those little daily reminders of her friends may not bring pleasant thoughts. She may even resent those that are rarely used yet take up valuable room in her cupboards and collect dust.

Last year a graduate student at one of the larger colleges of home economics made a study of the kitchen equipment in the homes of 160 young housewives -- none of them married over 6 years. Apparently all of these young wives had been honor guests at kitchen showers; at least, they reported from a third to almost three-fourths of their kitchen possessions as gifts. But they stated frankly that they weren't satisfied with them, and felt that they could make wiser purchases for themselves if they could plan a shower using what they had learned by experience. Several of them suggested that the hostess of the shower would do well to have the advice of some experienced homemakers or homemanagement experts to help her plan the gifts.

If you should happen to be going to a bridal shower this season -- or any season -- maybe you would be interested in the suggestions which these particular young wives offered to help anyone who is buying kitchen gifts.

First suggestion: Consider the friend who is to receive the gift, her taste, her kitchen and the kind of cooking she is most likely to do. Many utensils that might be most helpful in a large farm kitchen, for example, will be inconvenient in a kitchenette, or a small apartment kitchen. Again, the bride who isn't given to baking much, won't need a large supply of baking tins. And the one who has plenty of hot water in her kitchen-pipes won't need a large tea-kettle.

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Second suggestion: Whenever possible, give a more or less standard utensil; that is, one offering no question of personal taste, unless you are absolutely certain of your friend's preferences. Standard articles include measuring cups, sturdy can openers, dover egg-beaters, and rolling pins.

You may be surprised that most of these young housewives mentioned a coffee-pot as a risky gift unless the friend who has to receive it had stated her choice of models. Nowadays, you know, cooks disagree often on the way they like their coffee made and the material they like their coffee-pots made of. Some favor drip coffee, others percolated coffee, still others the plain boiled variety. And then, some like glass pots, some enamel, some aluminum and so on.

Another suggestion: Play safe and give articles which do not vary widely in size. Opinions differ among brides as to the right size of such common utensils as bowls or saucepans.

Last suggestion: Find out all you can about the bride-to-be's preferences before you go shopping for the shower.

In fairness to these young housewives, let me hasten to add that they also reported disappointment in the kitchen articles they chose for themselves when they were first married. They readily confessed that they did no better for themselves, often not so well, as their friends did for them. And they agreed that every young housekeeper needs some kind of a guide to help her in buying her kitchen equipment.

So you may be interested now in a few pointers from experienced housekeepers and home management workers to aid the beginner in selecting kitchen goods.

First, they say, plan before you buy anything. Consider how much to spend for the kitchen in relation to other household needs. Consider time and energy and comfort as well as price.

Then, they suggest that you will usually save in the long run if you invest in more durable everyday equipment rather than in a large assortment and many duplicates of a cheaper grade. They believe that it generally pays to buy better quality in the utensils you will use every day than in those you use only occasionally. And they say that you'll be wise to look for durable material and strong, smooth construction, especially if you are investing in high-priced ware. Very often, duplicate articles are just a nuisances and space-fillers. But now and then, you'll be wise to buy several utensils for the same purpose. If you keep a paring knife both at the table and at the sink, you will often save steps. And if you have several sets of salt-and-pepper shakers at different work centers, they will also save time and steps.

Comfort as well as convenience is worth considering in buying any tool. Be sure that a utensil is not too heavy for your use; be sure all handles fit your hand comfortably and so on.

All these are just little hints, you know, listeners. Nothing very new and startling about them. But they may help this year's crop of brides make a happier beginning.
